

Sundance Film Festival is all heart

By Jami Bernard
Knight-Ridder Tribune

PARK CITY, Utah — Relationship movies set hearts on fire at the Sundance Film Festival, which wrapped Jan. 30th.

Fine Line and Lions Gate are said to be duking it out over the crowd-pleasing "Love and Sex." This semi-autobiographical laugh-a-thon by Valerie Breiman is based on her (now-defunct) relationship with filmmaker Adam Rifkin.

"Welcome to my sex life" is how Breiman ruefully introduced it. Rifkin, still a buddy, later took a bow for inspiring Breiman's portrait of a woman in search of a good relationship, starring Famke Janssen and Jon Favreau. "I love doing indie films," said the slightly bulky Favreau after the premiere. "It's the only place where I can get the girl."

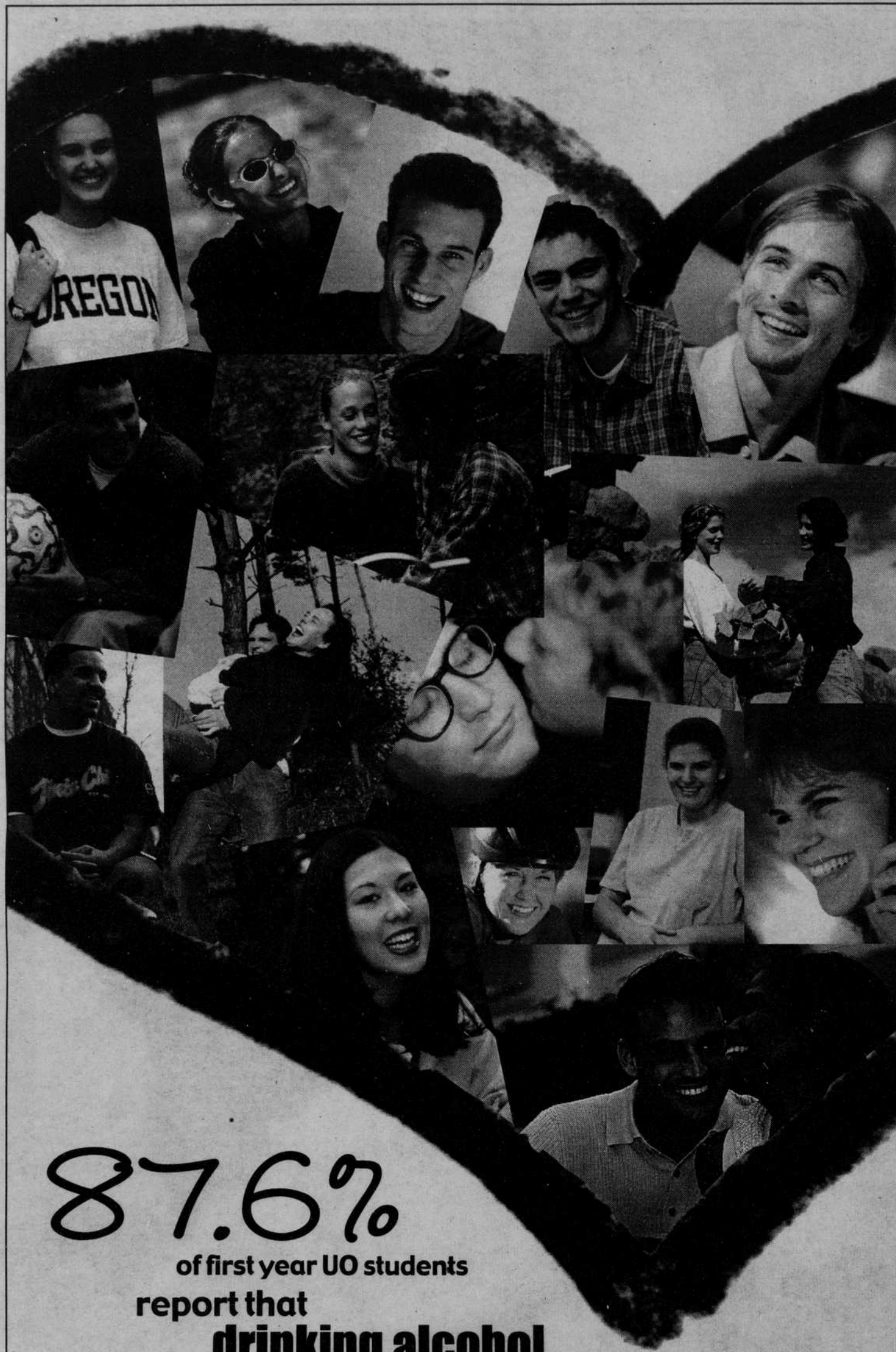
"Chuck and Buck," another relationship movie, quickly was sold to Artisan for \$1.5 million as one of the first buys of the fest. Mike White wrote the screenplay and plays Buck, an overgrown kid who can't give up his crush on his childhood friend. Director Miguel Arteta ("Star Maps") took a picture of the audience to show his parents "so they can start taking this filmmaking thing a little more seriously." The audience roared — it was composed largely of struggling filmmakers who also have been told somewhere along the line to get a "real" job.

Among the other early festival favorites on the verge of getting picked up is "You Can Count on Me," a beautifully acted drama about estranged siblings who affect each other like the tides, starring Laura Linney and Mark Ruffalo, and yet another talented Culkin child, Rory.

The documentary category has also proved particularly inspirational this year, leaving audiences in tears. In fact, you can't see "Legacy" without a full pack of Kleenex. Filmmaker Tod S. Lending followed one family around the Chicago projects for five years and documented their incredible — and ultimately winning — struggle against poverty, drugs and the vicissitudes of life. He began filming coincidentally on the day that one of the family's most promising children, 14-year-old Tyrrell, was shot and killed by a classmate on his way home from school. Tyrrell's sister provides the narration for the movie, which is both heartbreaking and immensely uplifting, and she received standing ovations wherever she went here.

"The Sound and the Fury" is also about a family's emotional struggle — this time over the hot-potato issue in the deaf community of cochlear implants for children, a way to help them hear and develop spoken-language skills. A hearing mother and her adult deaf son squared off on the issue, not only in the movie but after screenings here as well. It's an important issue about a community that feels immensely threatened by encroaching technology.

Also on the ka-ching front: Fine Line bought "Saving Grace" for a rumored \$4 million, with Blethyn starring as a woman who grows pot to reduce her debts, and Lions Gate bought "Two-Family House," about an oppressive Staten Island household, starring the delightfully plain-spoken Katherine Narducci of "The Sopranos." Narducci grew up at 116th Street and First Avenue, and at the Premiere party said that anyone reared in New York will relate to the movie.



87.6%

of first year UO students

report that

drinking alcohol

does

NOT

make them feel

sexier.

Data taken from the 1998 CORE Survey

2000
Office of Student Life